

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

On page 5, line 26, please replace the word " Velcro," with "VELCRO® or other hook and loop fabric fastener,".

On page 6, line 6, please replace the word " Velcro," with "VELCRO® or other hook and loop fabric fastener,".

On page 15, line 1, please replace the word " Velcro," with "VELCRO® or other hook and loop fabric fastener,".

On page 17, line 28, please replace the word " Velcro" with "VELCRO® or other hook and loop fabric fastener".

On page 19, lines 3 and 33, please replace the word " Velcro," with "VELCRO® or other hook and loop fabric fastener,".

On page 5, line 17, please add the following words to the end of the paragraph: "other suitable telescopic locking means." in order to complete the phrase.

On page 12, line 25, please add the following paragraphs:

The upper and lower traction elements, in a further embodiment, are integral to the backboard and fold into the backboard when not in use. The traction elements are unfolded out of the backboard when needed.

In yet another embodiment, the backboard with the integral traction splint, further comprises a section that selectively folds out to elevate one or both legs. The leg elevation region comprises optional padding. The leg elevation region further comprises an optional articulation region that permits the knee to bend. The amount of leg elevation and leg articulation may be variable and controllable or they may be pre-set to certain preferred levels. A similar feature optionally is provided for arm elevation and articulation if required.

In a further embodiment, the traction splint is provided integral to the backboard. The traction elements slide up and down along the backboard in a groove or slot. The traction elements have the capability of locking into the groove or slot in the backboard. When the patient is to be removed from the backboard, the upper traction element, a longitudinal element, and the lower traction element are separated from the backboard

and stay with the patient. The upper and lower traction elements and the longitudinal support are disposable. A new disposable upper traction element, lower traction element and longitudinal support are reloaded onto the backboard or stretcher for the next case. This disposability allows for the traction splint to stay with the patient throughout their early therapy and for the stretcher or backboard to be immediately reused on another patient with a new disposable traction apparatus.

In yet a further embodiment of the traction splint with the integral backboard, the traction elements are disposed within releasable slots in the backboard. The traction elements are removable from the backboard so as to stay with the patient. The removable traction splint traction elements further comprise a removable longitudinal support that is normally integral to the backboard or a separately added piece. The separately added longitudinal support is attached to the traction elements once the correct amount of traction and appendage orientation have been determined. The longitudinal support is added through lockable elements in the traction elements to maintain their orientation and traction following removal from the backboard. Alternatively, the longitudinal support is that region of the backboard that holds the traction elements. This region is capable of being unlocked, detached, or removed from the backboard so as to stay with the traction elements.

In yet another embodiment of the invention, an adult and a pediatric backboard traction splint combination is provided due to the extreme differences in sizes of these types of patients.

Using the methods of the present invention, a patient is placed directly upon the backboard. The lower traction element is folded out and placed in contact with the top of the foot and locked in place so as to be able to provide axial caudal traction force on the foot. The lower traction element is advanced axially caudally until the desired traction force is applied to the foot. The leg is optionally elevated prior to applying the traction.

On page 17, line 5, please add the following sentences to the paragraph:
The wheels may be spherical and roll in sockets rather than disc-shaped and on axles.
The backboard 82 may comprise a covering to secure the patient thereon. The

covering may comprise materials such as Kevlar that are resistant to penetration and thus protect the patient from external dangers. The hollow wheels, disc-shaped or spherically shaped, may serve as flotation devices for the backboard 82. The backboard 82, of this embodiment, is especially well suited to military applications so that a single soldier can remove an injured soldier to safety without the need for additional help in carrying the stretcher. The single soldier can further carry and use a weapon while transporting the injured soldier since the transporting soldier has their hands free during transport.